



ETHICS AND ACHIEVEMENT IN MAINE'S *LEARNING RESULTS*



ETHICS AND ACHIEVEMENT

A safe, respectful, and democratic learning environment is much more than a necessary precondition for education. Our focus on ethical and responsible student behavior is not an “add-on” to the school’s mission, intended to plug a gap in social structure or social services. Student ethics, attitudes, behavior, and character are essential outcomes of our educational mission, and are indispensable to the achievement of the standards in Maine’s *Learning Results*.

Learning Results Guiding Principles

Every student should be...

IV. A Responsible and Involved Citizen Who:

- 1. Recognizes the power of personal participation to affect the community and demonstrates participation skills;**
- 2. Understands the importance of accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions;**
- 3. Knows the means of achieving personal and community health and well-being; and**
- 4. Recognizes and understands the diverse nature of society.**

In 1996, the Maine Legislature adopted the *Learning Results* to establish learning standards for all Maine students educated at public expense. The legislation established the Guiding Principles of the *Learning Results*, describing what every student should know and be able to do upon completion of a public education. The *Learning Results* consists of content standards and performance indicators in eight academic content areas. These standards and indicators are unified by the Guiding Principles, which describe the philosophical and practical essentials of learning and citizenship that are the aggregate outcomes of teaching and learning in the individual disciplines.

The Guiding Principles of Maine’s *Learning Results* go beyond academic standards to address the personal capacities our youth will need to thrive in an increasingly complex society and economy. We cannot successfully educate students to be creative and practical problem solvers, responsible and involved citizens, and collaborative and quality workers without teaching the underpinnings of ethics and character.

In a recent survey of over 2,300 employees, “...workers noted sexual harassment, conflicts of interest, employment discrimination, deceptive sales practices, unsafe working conditions and environmental breaches... The study found that nearly 75% of workers believed cynicism, low morale and indifference were to blame for misconduct,”

-Sebastian (2000)

In this regard, the *Learning Results* builds on and follows the spirit of Maine’s *Common Core of Learning* (1990). The *Common Core* addressed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need, and identified Personal and Global Stewardship as one of four unifying categories that cut across individual academic disciplines. In rich language, the *Common Core* defined stewardship to include a capacity to:

- Accept responsibility for personal decisions and actions;
- Demonstrate academic honesty and respond to challenges with courage and integrity;
- Respect the human rights of all people; and
- Understand the ethical dimensions of citizenship, love, friendship, and parenting.

The Common Core of Learning

• Personal and Global Stewardship

"Responsible citizenship requires awareness and a concern for oneself, others, and the environment."

Below the level of Guiding Principles and general concepts, the *Learning Results* content area standards and indicators begin to implicitly define standards of ethical and responsible behavior. Many of the most powerful references can be found in the content areas of Career Preparation, Health and Physical Education, and Social Studies. The specific skills and aptitudes described there reflect responsibility, teamwork, communication, conflict resolution, stress management, community involvement, tolerance and inclusion, and more.

This report serves as a necessary complement to these existing references in *Learning Results*. We certainly support a strong emphasis on critical thinking, decision-making, and conflict reso-

lution skills. However, when viewed in the context of the Guiding Principles, these skills are a means to an end. Students cannot acquire such skills in isolation; the skills must be applied in a coherent fashion as part of putting into action a set of core values. Without addressing values and attitudes, application of these skills cannot successfully be taught.

This report serves two purposes relative to the *Learning Results* document. First, where the *Learning Results* have not yet translated the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in the Guiding Principles into more specific standards, this report begins to do so. Second, in those areas where the *Learning Results* does already contain specific standards and indicators, our work can serve to focus attention, guide implementation, and help establish a context for the standards and indicators that is connected to the process, practices, and expectations in our communities.

We also seek connections to other recent work that has called upon educators and the public to implement the vision—intrinsic to the *Common Core* and the *Learning Results*—of a school climate responsive to the needs of the whole child. The Commission on Secondary Education's 1998 report, *Promising Futures*, identified a safe, respectful, caring, and democratic environment for learning among important core principles for Maine's high schools.

Promising Futures addresses structural changes that support a meaningful and positive shift in school culture. While *Promising Futures* specifically addresses high schools, our recommendations call for the application of similar principles and practices across all grade levels. We encourage high schools to use our document in tandem with *Promising Futures*, and we invite educators at other grade levels to consider that work as an illustration of the connections between structures, academic achievement, and student behaviors.

ETHICS AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF MAINE'S LEARNING RESULTS: SELECTED EXAMPLES

III. A Creative and Practical Problem Solver

- A. observes situations objectively to clearly and accurately define problems;
- B. frames questions and designs data collection and analysis strategies from all disciplines to answer those questions;
- C. identifies patterns, trends, and relationships that apply to solutions of problems; and
- D. generates a variety of solutions, builds a case for the best response, and critically evaluates the effectiveness of this response.

IMPLICIT VALUES Tolerance, Open-mindedness, Social Awareness	SKILLS Conflict Resolution, Critical Thinking, Decision-Making, Appreciation of Diversity, Awareness of Consequences
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IV. A Responsible and Involved Citizen

- A. recognizes the power of personal participation to affect the community and demonstrates participation skills;
- B. understands the importance of accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions;
- C. knows the means of achieving personal and community health and well-being; and
- D. recognizes and understands the diverse nature of society.

IMPLICIT VALUES Responsibility, Reliability, Conscientiousness, Team Work, Dedication, Social Awareness, Respect for Diversity, Tolerance	SKILLS Community Service, Exposure to Diversity
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V. A Collaborative and Quality Worker

- A. knows the structure and functions of the labor market;
- B. assesses individual interests, aptitudes, skills and values in relation to demands of the workplace; and
- C. demonstrates reliability, flexibility, and concern for quality.

IMPLICIT VALUES Reliability, Tolerance, Conscientiousness, Discipline, Dedication, Self Control, Honesty, Integrity, Self Awareness	SKILLS Time Management, Development of a Strong Work Ethic, Business Etiquette and Ethics
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ETHICS AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE INDICATORS OF MAINE'S LEARNING RESULTS: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF STUDENT OUTCOMES

Career Preparation

Standard A:

- Develop effective ways to interact with others during school and after-school activities. (Grades Pre-K-2)
- Demonstrate workplace behaviors such as punctuality, flexibility, teamwork, and perseverance. (Grades Pre-K-2)
- Demonstrate how positive and negative attitudes affect one's ability to work with others. (Grades 3-4)
- Demonstrate the leadership and membership skills necessary to succeed as a member of a team. (Secondary Grades)

Standard D:

- Exhibit, during the school day, the personal qualities that lead to responsible behavior. (Grades 3-4)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of community involvement to family and community life. (Secondary Grades)

Health Education

Standard C:

- Apply coping strategies when they feel too excited, anxious, angry, or out of control. (Grades Pre-K-2)
- Distinguish between healthy and unhealthy stress management techniques. (Grades 5-8)
- Demonstrate strategies to avoid, change, and report unsafe situations. (Secondary Grades)

Standard E:

- Demonstrate refusal and negotiation skills which can enhance health by enabling them to deal with negative peer pressure. (Grades 5-8)
- Demonstrate conflict resolution strategies. (Grades 5-8)
- Demonstrate strategies that can be used to prevent or solve conflicts without harm. (Secondary Grades)

Physical Education

Standard C:

- Describe ways in which respect for individual similarities and differences among people is demonstrated in physical activity settings. (Grades 5-8)
- Participate safely and cooperatively with others to achieve group goals in competitive and cooperative physical activities. (Grades 5-8)